DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 727 SP 041 565

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TITLE	Multiple Points of Entry into Teaching for Urban Communities. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-SP-2002-04
PUB DATE	2002-12-00
NOTE	4p.; Contains small print.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0007
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1307 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005-4701. Tel: 202-293-2450; Tel: 800-822-9229 (Toll Free); Fax: 202-457-8095; e-mail: query@aacte.org; Web site: http://www.ericsp.org.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Alternative Teacher Certification; Culturally Relevant Education; *Diversity (Faculty); Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Paraprofessional School Personnel; Preservice Teacher Education; *Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Shortage; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests; Support Personnel

ABSTRACT

Today's teachers shortage is most severe in urban districts, which struggle to recruit and retain new teachers and face persistent gaps between white, middle class teachers and diverse students. Teachers' lack of cultural and linguistic familiarity in such situations can be damaging to the goal of ensuring that all children achieve to their potential. The digest suggests that traditional recruitment strategies in teacher education alone are insufficient to meet this ongoing need. It recommends supporting a wide range of pipelines for those in the community who wish to become teachers. The digest examines: the concept of multiple entry points into teaching; the role of the P-16 council, which can help facilitate widespread knowledge of the multiple pathways available; support for multiple entry points; and supporting a diverse teaching workforce (a major strategy of the multiple entry points approach is the recruitment of incumbent workers, who are already committed to education and who tend to be minorities). The digest concludes that the design and delivery of preservice programs of the highest quality is essential, which means taking standards seriously, challenging programs to improve, and communicating clearly to all potential students, from every pipeline, what it means to be a good teacher for urban education. (Contains 26 references.) (SM)

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ERIC Digest

By

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December 2002 EDO-SP-2002-04

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education

SP041565

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Multiple Points of Entry into Teaching for Urban Communities

Linda Post, Marleen Pugach, Ann Hains, and Alfonzo Thurman

The nationwide shortage of teachers is well documented, and nowhere is the shortage more dire than in urban school districts (Recruiting New Teachers, 2000), which struggle both to recruit and retain new teachers. Not only do urban school districts face a shortage of teachers generally, but also they continue to face a persistent gap between a primarily white, middle class teaching force and student populations that are primarily of color, have a native language other than English, or are of low socioeconomic levels (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). When the majority of teachers in urban schools do not reflect the communities of their students, the potential for a mismatch between teachers and their students is unmistakable (Carr, 2002; Delpit, 1995; Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999; Hodgkinson, 2001; Hodgkinson, 2002), and "Different cultural beliefs and practices have been noted as a frequent barrier to effective [read respectful] interaction" (Harry, Kalyanpur and Day, 1999, p. 6). This lack of cultural or language familiarity and understanding can be damaging to the goal of making sure that every child in an urban school district achieves to his or her potential (Gay, 2000; Gay, 2002; Howard, 1999).

The shortage in qualified personnel to work in urban environments (Villegas & Clewell, 1998) and in specific disciplines continues (23rd Annual report to Congress, 2001). For example, "A report earlier this year from the U.S. Department of Education said that 13 percent of the special-education positions in the nation's schools in 1999-2000 were being filled by teachers who weren't certified in special education, including 12,000 positions being held by substitute teachers" (Temkin, 2002). These shortages are accentuated by the need to recruit and retain qualified personnel of different cultures, values and languages (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Hanson (1998) notes, "existing training programs for professionals who are most likely to work with children with disabilities and their families still have relatively few students who represent cultures with non-Anglo-European roots" (pp. 8-9). Similarly, few higher education preparation programs are culturally responsive to ethnic and language diversity (Isenberg, 2000; Gay, 2002; Kushner & Ortiz, 2000) or have diverse faculty (Isenberg, 2000; APA, 1997). "If the needs of children and families are to be authentically addressed, our leaders need to reflect the communities they serve (Elliott, K., Alvarado, C., Copland, J., Surr, W., Farris, M., Genser, A., et al., 1999, p. 2).

In the face of such critical shortages, it appears traditional recruitment strategies in teacher education alone will not be sufficient to meet this ongoing need—at least not in the foreseeable future (Hodgkinson, 2002). One strategy for cutting into the teacher shortage systematically is to support a wide range of pipelines for those in our community who wish to become teachers—in other words, multiple entry points into teaching. The goal is to ensure that every individual interested in a career in teaching in the community has access to a preservice program that best matches his or her education, experience, family circumstances, and timeframe.

The Concept of Multiple Entry Points

At urban institutions such as those that participate in the Great Cities' Universities Urban Educator Corps (http://www.gcu-uec.org/), programs enable prospective teachers to begin preservice preparation at multiple entry points. These programs are focused on identifying individuals who have a desire to teach in urban schools and who represent the diversity existing in urban classrooms. This goal has resulted in the establishment of a broad range of partnerships focused on developing a career lattice that moves an individual from one stage to the next with the end result being an initial teaching license. Partnerships with institutions and agencies means shared financial responsibility for these programs through base budget allocations, grants and gifts. Similar efforts are underway with the Holmes Group's Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education (UNITE: http://www.holmespartnership.org/UNITE).

The Role of the P-16 Council

If a community is committed to supporting multiple entry points into teaching, then by design it must also be dedicated to fostering a high level of commitment among key local stakeholders across a range of institutions that play a role in the preparation of new teachers for urban schools. The emerging trend toward P-16 councils is promising in this regard. These interagency councils exist at the state and local levels, and often include representatives from the two-year technical (community) colleges, school districts, teachers' unions, school boards, local teacher education institutions, the business community, and local foundations. This collective commitment to improving the quality and diversity of the local teaching force provides a supportive community environment for implementing the full array of multiple pathways.

P-16 councils help facilitate widespread knowledge of the multiple pathways available. Without cooperation and coordination, multiple entry points may result in confusion for those who seek to become licensed teachers—with seemingly too many choices for programs. But as representatives of each institution become more knowledgeable about the available pathways into teaching, and the populations for which each may be appropriate, they begin to envision possibilities for making information available throughout the community in a variety of formats (e.g., print materials, Web sites, recruitment sessions).

Articulation among the various institutions must also be smooth. If students begin in one institution and transfer to another, the articulation must be as seamless as possible. If students in alternative programs require a mentor from the school district to support their first years of teaching, the coordination between the program and the local urban school district must be strong. If students in undergraduate or postbaccalaureate programs require multiple field experiences in the classrooms of the most skilled teachers, articulation with the district and the individual schools must be effective. The local P-16 council facilitates these relationships and strengthens them in a way that simply is not possible when institutions function in relative isolation.

Support for Multiple Entry Points

With an operational governance structure, an on-going, consistent communication process connects all of the community's programs and partners. As a result, an individual who wishes to teach in an urban school can receive tailored advising to enter at the appropriate point of the career lattice and at the appropriate partner institution. The successful creation of this *'point of entry' advising and referral* system provides a vehicle for working with someone who has no college credit, some college credit, two years of college work, and someone who has completed a four year college program and enters at the post-baccalaureate level. The array of entry points include pre-college programs, two year programs leading to four year programs, four year programs, post-baccalaureate certification programs offering both traditional and alternative approaches, and induction programs once the beginning teacher has received certification.

Entry points vary by discipline as well as level of education. For example, in childcare, the early childhood professional organizations at the state level include the participant's training, experience, and professionalism in statewide professional recognition systems that are monitored outside of state departments of education or human and family services (cf., The Registry—http://www.the-registry.org; WI Department of Public Instruction, 2001). Verification of entry-level course work completed outside of higher education (e.g., through Head Start, Child Care Apprenticeship Programs, etc.) is provided. Students often enter the teaching profession by traditional, parental, or serendipitous routes within a "career lattice" rather than a "career ladder" approach (Bredekamp, 1992; WI Early Childhood Collaborating Partners, 2001). For higher education, point of entry advising is especially important in assisting interested individuals

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who are just beginning to take college credits in selecting appropriate courses related to teaching, rather than simply collecting college credits that will not apply to the array of preservice options available.

At a state level, institutions of higher education can support multiple entry points across public and private programs. For example, North Carolina has a rigorous statewide teacher licensure program, NC TEACH, designed to recruit, prepare, and support mid-career professionals as they begin a teaching career in North Carolina's public schools (NC TEACH Newsletter, 2001). The program is administered by the state's higher education system (University of North Carolina Office of the President), in collaboration with the state's education agency (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction). It is supported with funding from Title II of the U.S. Department of Education Higher Education Act. The program begins with a full-time summer course for five weeks offered at nine host sites located throughout the state followed by seminars that are conducted during the following school year. Some modules are taught online (NC TEACH Newsletter, 2001). The students are assigned to a host site and receive instruction from master teachers and higher education faculty, and are eligible to earn 12-18 graduate credits at the host institution (http://ncteach.ga.unc.edu). This accelerated program also provides students with mentoring and support during their first year of teaching.

Support for a Diverse Teaching Workforce

A major strategy of the multiple entry points approach is the recruitment of incumbent workers. Many aides, paraprofessionals, day care workers, safety aides, secretaries, kitchen staff, and other entry-level workers in the urban schools are seeking a way to advance on the career lattice toward a career in teaching. As an example, several programs have focused on recruitment of general aides and paraprofessionals. These incumbent workers have already made a commitment to urban schools and in many cases are more representative of the children attending urban schools. Nationally, the DeWitt Wallace Readers Digest Funds has supported these students in the Pathways to Teaching Careers Program as part of its mission to "develop better ways to recruit and train a diverse corps of teachers ready for the challenges and rewards of working in hard-to-staff public schools in low-income urban and rural communities across the nation" (Focus:Pathways, 1997). The Pathways program serves as a useful model for recruiting paraprofessionals and selecting teacher candidates. (Clewell & Villegas, 2001)

At the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, follow-up studies of Pathways graduates and students in an alternative certification program (Metropolitan Multicultural Teacher Education Program) show that over 94% of the graduates are still teaching in the Milwaukee Public Schools. All graduates are rated satisfactory or exemplary by their building principals, and over 80% of the graduates are teachers of color. This illustrates an important reason for the focus on incumbent workers. Individuals who live in the urban community and have made a commitment to teach there are more likely to stay as teachers.

Conclusion

A goal in launching multiple entry points into teaching for urban schools is to increase the number and diversity of teachers who wish to work in the urban community. The design and delivery of preservice programs of the highest quality is essential, no matter what the particular structure or the point of entry. This means taking standards of performance seriously, challenging programs to improve, and communicating clearly to all potential students, from every pipeline and in every pathway, what it means to be a good teacher for urban schools.

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